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1962/10/22

MESSAGE 121

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
STAFF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE**

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TO: CINCLANT
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BLOCKADE OF CUBA

1. In accordance with the orders of the Secretary of Defense, prepare plans for blockade of Cuba in accordance with the following:

A. Purpose

The objective of the blockade is the prevention of entry into Cuba of offensive weapons hereinafter referred to as prohibited material, and ultimately the withdrawal of such weapons now in the Island. A tentative list of prohibited materials includes: patrol craft, motor torpedo boats or other craft with armament provisions, and their armament, including surface-to-surface missiles and torpedoes; land-based surface-to-surface missiles; bomber and fighter-bomber aircraft; bombs, air-to-surface rockets and guided missiles; warheads for any of the above weapons; mechanical or electronic equipment to support or operate the above items; and any other items hereafter designated by the Secretary of Defense.

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B. General Rules

1. General guidance contained in Section ~~1A~~ Part 6, paragraph 1, JCS 985951 is superseded by this instruction; para 2 will apply except as modified herein.

2. Guidance for conduct of engagement between US forces and ships and aircraft of other registry or ownership is covered below.

C. Visit, Search, Seizure and Diversions

1. Ships, including ~~commercial~~ both Soviet and non-Soviet, designated by CINCLANT on basis of information available to him will be intercepted by US ships. If CINCLANT or the Commander of the intercepting ship believes the ship may be carrying prohibited material, a visit and search will be made, in a manner similar to that described in paragraph 502b of NWIP 10-2.

2. Ships which after being intercepted signal their intent to divert to non-Cuban ports may be released without visit and search. Surveillance will be maintained over those ships. Any ship which fails to proceed as selected, or which attempts to proceed to a Cuban port, will be stopped and boarded. If a satisfactory explanation for his failure to proceed as elected is not promptly forthcoming, the ship will be seized and diverted to a US port designated by the Blockade Force Commander or other authority as designated by CINCLANT for disposition.

3. Ships which are to be visited will be stopped. In signifying his intent to stop a ship, the US Commander will use all available communications, including international code signals, flag hoists, blinking lights, radio, loudspeaker etc. Failing this, warning shots across the bow should be fired. Failing this, make use of minimum force, taking care to damage non-vital parts of the ship, such as the rudder, and to avoid injury or loss of life if possible.

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4. Visit and search of a stopped ship shall consist of examining the manifest and inspecting the engine. In the event visit is refused, the ship may be seized. This shall be done by placing a boarding party on board. Personal boarding and control of the ship's operation may be necessary. If boarding meets with organized resistance, the ship will be destroyed.

5. If it becomes necessary to destroy a ship, give ample warning of intentions to permit sufficient time for debarkation of the passengers and crew. Assistance shall be given to the maximum extent permitted by the operational conditions.

6. Ships which have been searched and found to be carrying prohibited material shall be directed to proceed to such non-Cuban port as the owners or master may elect. Surveillance shall be maintained over these ships. Any ship which fails to proceed as elected, or which attempts to proceed to a Cuban port, will be handled as detailed in paragraph 2 above.

7. If a ship is visited but search is refused, the commander of the ship or force conducting the visit will seize the ship if he has reasonable grounds for suspecting the ship to be carrying prohibited materials. It will be diverted to a designated US port for disposition.

8. Nothing in the above shall be construed as preventing or interfering with the right of visit and search by any US ship. Specifically:

a. Any ships, including surface warships, armed merchant ships or submarines, which interfere or threaten to interfere with a US ship engaged in visit and search will be treated as hostile and may be engaged to the extent required to terminate the interference.

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b. Any ships, including surface warships, armed merchant ships, or submarines, which place themselves in a position or take action which can reasonably be considered as threatening a US ship engaged in search and rescue may be subjected to attack to the extent required to terminate the threat.

D. Blockade of aircraft

1. Plans should be made, to apply when ordered by higher headquarters, to prevent aircraft enroute to Cuba which are believed to carry prohibited material from reaching their destination. Responsibility for action against such aircraft, when ordered by higher headquarters, will pass to CINCLANT when they enter his area of responsibility.

2. In taking action against such aircraft, every effort will be made to avoid interference with or inconvenience to innocent traffic.

3. In preventing an aircraft carrying prohibited material from entering Cuba, the following steps shall be taken:

First, attempts by every possible means shall be made to direct the pilot to land the aircraft at a suitable airfield under US control.

Failing this, aircraft shall be dispatched to intercept. Upon interception, and after positive identification, they shall maneuver to direct the pilot of the suspected aircraft to follow to the airfield. In making the intercept and in maneuvering care shall be taken to avoid danger of an accidental collision.

If the suspected aircraft fails to follow the intercepting aircraft, shots or a rocket or flare may be fired, in such a manner that the aircraft is not endangered but that the pilot cannot fail to see it. If time is available this action should be repeated.

Failing this, the base or force commander of the operation shall be contacted by the interceptor pilot for instructions. The interceptor pilot shall take hostile action against

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the suspected aircraft only upon receipt of positive authenticated instructions from his commander or from higher authority.

II. Concept of Operations

A. General. It is contemplated that maximum use will be made of all available assets for collecting, reporting and interpreting intelligence relative to merchant shipping and aircraft engaged in trade with Cuba to identify those which might be carrying prohibited material. Intelligence indicates that the majority of prohibited material is carried in Communist bloc ships.

B. Conduct of Blockade Patrols and Air Surveillance

Until further directive planning for these operations will be carried out on the basis that normal position of intercept will take place outside the effective range of aircraft known to be operational from their established bases.

C. Diversion Ports

US ports designated to receive ships diverted as described in para B.2 above will be chosen with due regard to the desirability of remaining outside the effective range of aircraft known to be operational in Cuba with the availability of US air protection.

III. Defense of Guantanamo

A. General

Establishment of the blockade described above may lead to attack or threat of attack by Cuban forces on the Naval Base Guantanamo or against ships or aircraft approaching or leaving Guantanamo. Prior to establishment of the blockade, dependents will be evacuated. Suitable force dispositions, including the stationing of naval forces and troop reinforcements, will be taken as appropriate upon receipt of this message. Any attack against the Guantanamo Naval Base or against ships or aircraft approaching or leaving will be repulsed by offensive action against the attacking aircraft or ship or ground-installation. Only in the event that it is absolutely necessary in order to protect American lives will U.S. forces be authorized to attack the bases from which the aircraft or ships are operating.

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~~TOP SECRET~~B. Special Rules of Engagement

In addition to the rules of engagement previously referenced, permission is granted coincident with establishment of the above described blockade to immediately engage and destroy any KCMPA Class PGM which makes a hostile approach on US Naval forces or US merchant shipping.

IV. Control and Protection of American Merchant Shipping

A. Coincident with establishment of the blockade, institute protection for U.S. shipping in Florida Straits, Yucatan Channel, and Windward Passage. Use air cover and surface forces as necessary. It is not desired to institute control of shipping measures although advisable due to preferred routings such as passage close to the Florida Keys and Mexican coast and use of Mona vice Windward Passage may be desirable in the interest of economic use of forces.

V. Availability of Allied or Friendly Forces

Prior to and immediately following the Presidential Proclamation of a blockade of Cuba, efforts will be made to enlist the aid of allied or friendly nations in enforcing the blockade. CINCUSMACV should cooperate fully with such nations and take every advantage of their contributions to increase the efficiency of the blockade and to reduce the commitment of US forces.

VI. Hot Pursuit

Pursuit, attack and destruction of any Cuban naval craft or airplane, attacking or attempting to attack U.S. territory, shipping, aircraft or naval unit is authorized. Attack on the bases of such craft or airplanes is not authorized except as stated in III.a. above.

VII. Reports

Prompt reports to higher headquarters on all incidents are absolutely essential.

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